

CHAPTER XXIX

LORD KITCHENER'S INTERVENTION

IN Egypt Sir Charles Monro learnt that his advice to the Nov. Government on the subject of the Dardanelles had merely ended in his own supersession. General Birdwood, who was opposed to evacuation, had been appointed in his place to command the Gallipoli army, and he himself was to go to Salonika. Monro was further told that, as the French Government were more anxious about the numbers than the fighting value of the troops ordered to Greece, the 27th and 28th (Regular) Divisions would probably be used to reinforce Birdwood in exchange for three tired divisions¹ to be sent to Salonika.

For General Monro, lately uprooted from his enviable command in France for the sole purpose of advising the British Government, this sudden change in his fortune must have been bitter news. Apparently, however, he was still required to discuss with General Maxwell the best means of checkmating a Turco-German advance against Egypt if it were, after all, found necessary to withdraw from Gallipoli, and the best way of countering the effect of evacuation throughout the Moslem world.

Discussions on this subject had already begun when urgent orders arrived that Monro, Maxwell and Sir Henry MacMahon the High Commissioner in Egypt, were all to hurry north to meet Lord Kitchener at Mudros.

Previous to Sir Charles Monro's arrival at Cairo, Sir John Maxwell had advised Lord Kitchener that, if Gallipoli were evacuated, the best way to protect Egypt would be the old plan of holding a position astride the Turkish main line of communications in the neighbourhood of Alexandretta. Lord Kitchener had replied that a better base than Alexandretta for the suggested operation would be at Ayas Bay, on the opposite side of the Gulf of Iskanderun. This bay could be protected against submarine attack. It was also just outside the French sphere of influence in Syria.

¹ The 53rd, 54th and Royal Naval Divisions.

Nov. General Monro, it will be remembered, had telegraphed to Lord Kitchener on the 2nd November that he did not share General Maxwell's anxieties with regard to the effect of an evacuation, and was strongly opposed to the idea of another landing. But on arrival in Egypt he had found that Maxwell was firmly of opinion that, in the event of an evacuation, a landing at or near Alexandretta would be the only means of ensuring the safety of Egypt. He expected that Lord Kitchener would share that view, and he accordingly appears to have decided that the adoption of some plan of this nature would be the best means of securing approval for the evacuation of the peninsula. He and his staff, therefore, had been considering the question during their short stay in Cairo, and, independently of General Maxwell, had arrived at the conclusion that the seizure of the Turkish railway north of Ayas Bay was the plan which was open to the fewest military objections.

During the voyage to Mudros the whole subject of evacuation was discussed afresh between Monro, Maxwell and MacMahon. Maxwell and MacMahon were still afraid of the political effect of withdrawing from the Dardanelles. Monro, on the other hand, argued that the peninsula could not be held against a Turkish army supported by German munitions. In view of his great experience on the Western front, this argument was convincing. Before reaching Mudros Monro appears to have persuaded his two companions not only that evacuation was advisable, but that a small force astride the railway to the north of Ayas Bay could do more for the protection of Egypt than an army cooped up in Gallipoli.

Arriving at Mudros on the 9th November, Monro was joined by Birdwood, and heard for the first time of Lord Kitchener's recent telegrams to that officer, of his refusal to agree to evacuation, his efforts to arrange a new attack, and of Keyes's suggestion (already apparently abandoned) of a new naval attempt to rush the Straits. Finally he learnt of Birdwood's loyalty in refusing, pending Lord Kitchener's arrival, to let anyone know that he himself had been officially placed in command of the Gallipoli Army.

Late that evening Lord Kitchener arrived from Marseilles, and for the next twelve days there followed a long chain of conferences on the subject of evacuation.

Of Lord Kitchener's advisers on the spot, Admiral de Robeck, who persisted in pointing out the folly of any further attempt to rush the Narrows, was ready, if ordered, to evacuate Suvla and Anzac, but wanted to retain Helles in order to help the Navy to blockade the entrance to the Straits. Sir John

Maxwell and Sir Henry MacMahon were resigned to evacuation. Nov. tion provided a landing could *first* be made at Ayas Bay. Sir Charles Monro was in favour of evacuation, and to secure that end was ready to support the Ayas Bay scheme. General Birdwood, on the understanding that no additional troops could be spared for Gallipoli, and that the fleet would not renew their attempt to force the Straits, was no longer strongly opposed to evacuation.¹ But, in view of the approach of winter, and the added danger to which his troops on the peninsula would be subjected if the greater part of the available small craft were *first* despatched to a point 900 miles away to make a new landing, he was strenuously opposed to a landing at Ayas Bay.

On the 10th November Lord Kitchener telegraphed his first report to the Prime Minister. As yet he made no definite recommendation with regard to evacuation. But he was already apparently persuaded that the peninsula would have to be abandoned, for his message expressly stated that Maxwell, Monro and MacMahon were all agreed that evacuation should be *preceded* by a landing in Ayas Bay. The object of this landing would be to seize and hold a position astride the Turkish railway, thus protecting Egypt, and assisting the operations in Mesopotamia by preventing the eastward flow of Turkish troops. He calculated that the troops necessary for the initial operation would be two good divisions² and 3,000 mounted troops; these to be followed by two more British divisions from France, and subsequently by further troops from Gallipoli when the evacuation was over.

Next day Lord Kitchener's private secretary (Colonel O. A. G. Fitzgerald) telegraphed to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the War Office:

The [Ayas Bay] scheme is working out well. Monro and Horne³ quite like it, and it would be a great improvement on the present military situation here. Politically it meets the requirements of our advance in Mesopotamia and the successful development of the Arab question.

At the War Office, however, the scheme found no approval. The Prime Minister telegraphed that in the opinion of the General Staff the operation would necessitate the employment

¹ In a memorandum to the Cabinet, dated 2nd December, describing his visit to the peninsula, Lord Kitchener wrote: "Stating it very briefly, General Birdwood's view was that he did not disagree with General Monro's military opinion, but would prefer to leave his bones at Anzac rather than give it up in view of the vast political reasons for retaining it."

² His intention was to use the 27th and 28th Divisions.

³ Major-General H. S. (subsequently Lord) Horne had gone out to Gallipoli on Lord Kitchener's staff.

Nov. of ten to twelve divisions, who would be chained to that neighbourhood for the duration of the war. The strain on Britain's military resources would be enormous, and the naval problem of protecting another line of submarine-infested communications might well prove insuperable. Surely it would be easier to meet the Turks at the end of their long advance than in their most favourable area for concentration.

Lord Kitchener, however, was now obsessed by the Ayas Bay scheme, and fuel had been added to his fears for Egypt by a report that Germany was seriously planning the capture of the Suez Canal. Kitchener, Maxwell and MacMahon were all agreed that a landing at Ayas Bay was the only way to prevent a real calamity. In their opinion political necessity outweighed the military disadvantages arrayed by the General Staff. An attack on Egypt would throw the Arabs into the arms of Germany, there would be risings in India and Egypt, and French as well as British possessions would be endangered throughout the Mahommedan world.

Meanwhile Lord Kitchener had spent three days in examining the positions on the peninsula, and consulting the corps commanders; and on the 15th November he telegraphed home his impressions. He still hesitated to give a definite recommendation in favour of withdrawal, and stated his belief that the British positions could be held against the Turks, "even if they received increased 'ammunition'". He considered, however, that the difficulty would increase "if Germany sent a German force to attack",¹ as "the lines are not deep enough to allow of proper arrangements for supports"; and he admitted that the retention of the peninsula, unless further progress could be made, which seemed very doubtful, would not detain a large army for the defence of the capital, and could not prevent "the realization of the German objective against Egypt and the East". He again pointed out, on the other hand, that these designs could be frustrated by a landing at Ayas Bay. Finally he added that, though evacuation would be extremely difficult and dangerous, he believed that it could be completed with less loss than had hitherto been feared.

Lord Kitchener was not alone in this belief. The joint naval and military committee, which had just completed the outline scheme for re-embarking the army, were also of opinion that if the plan could be kept secret, and if calm weather blessed

¹ Several officers had assured Lord Kitchener that, even with all the ammunition the Turks could bring to the peninsula, no Turkish offensive could ever capture the British positions, but that an offensive carried out by German infantry would be more likely to succeed.



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LORD KITCHENER AT ANZAC WITH GENERAL BIRDWOOD

Imperial War Museum Photo.

the enterprise, the losses incurred in an evacuation would in Nov. no event exceed 25,000 men, and might possibly be many less. But the weather was an incalculable hazard; during the past fortnight there had been an unpleasant succession of strong south-westerly winds; and even a moderate sea with the wind in the south-west would ruin the undertaking.

The news from the peninsula that night was ominous: "Anzac reports heaviest sea yet experienced; piers damaged" and a steamboat holed. IX Corps reports unusually heavy "and accurate shell fire on supply depot near C Beach. South pier badly damaged by the storm. Work on A Beach stopped by heavy sea, no landing possible at present."

In the course of his telegram to Mr. Asquith on the 15th November, Lord Kitchener paid a generous tribute to the work done in Gallipoli by Sir Ian Hamilton and the Expeditionary Force. "To gain what we hold", he wrote, "has been a most remarkable feat of arms. . . . Everyone has done wonders both on sea and land."

It is interesting to recall that on the 12th March, when giving Sir Ian Hamilton his original instructions, Lord Kitchener had told him that south of Kilid Bahr the peninsula was open to a landing on very easy terms, and that the fire of the fleet from both sides would make the flat and open country south of Achi Baba untenable by the enemy.¹ But now he had seen for himself the real difficulties of the ground. "The country", he admitted in his cable to the Prime Minister, "is much more difficult than I imagined, and the Turkish positions . . . are natural fortresses which, if not taken by surprise at first, could be held against very serious attack by larger forces than have been engaged." Sir Ian Hamilton, in other words, had after all not been so much to blame. "The base at Mudros is too far detached . . . and the proper co-ordination of the lines of communication is prevented by distance and sea voyages dependable on the weather. This state of things in my judgment is the main cause of our troops not having been able to do better."

To the General Staff's objection to a landing at Ayas Bay was now added a weighty warning from the French. In Paris

¹ See Vol. I. p. 88. In a memorandum written for Lord Kitchener in February 1915, which has only recently come to light, Major-Gen. C. E. Callwell, then D.M.O. at the War Office, wrote: "All that the troops will be required to do, up to the time when . . . the warships have passed the Narrows and entered the Marmara, will be landing under fire of ships, close in, and in smooth water, to finally destroy the works. . . . That means comparatively small landing parties of infantry and engineers, which, owing to the nature of the country, ought to be able to receive particularly effective support from the ships."

Nov. the idea of British troops in Asia Minor was regarded with dislike and mistrust. Lord Kitchener was told from home that the French Government were utterly opposed to the suggested expedition.

Meanwhile the situation at Salonika was becoming as embarrassing as that at the Dardanelles. The British and French divisions which had pushed up country to gain touch with the Serbs had failed in their object, and would probably be obliged to fall back into Greece. The attitude of the Greeks was uncertain and even menacing, and the new Greek Premier had announced that if the Allied troops did re-cross the frontier it would be the duty of Greece to disarm them. In view of this threat the French and British Governments were concerting measures to bring naval pressure to bear on Greece, and until the result of these steps was known it would obviously be unwise to come to a decision with regard to withdrawing from Gallipoli. The anxious situation in Salonika, indeed, was now demanding Lord Kitchener's first attention, and on the night of the 16th November he left Mudros with General Monro¹ to examine this new problem on the spot.

A week had now passed since Lord Kitchener arrived at Mudros. But though the vital question of "go" or "stay" on the peninsula was still unanswered, the week had not been wasted. From the chaos which existed a week earlier the nucleus of a plan was already beginning to form. Lord Kitchener, powerfully attracted by Monro's unbending steadfastness of purpose, was trusting more and more to his judgment, and had already practically decided to place him in general command of all the British troops in the Mediterranean outside Egypt, leaving General Birdwood in command in Gallipoli and General Mahon at Salonika.²

The Ayas Bay scheme was already fading into the background, and the 28th Division, which for the last week had been held in readiness in Egypt to make the initial landing, had been ordered to Salonika. General Monro's continued pressure in favour of evacuation was carrying all before it,³

¹ General Monro, who returned to Mudros on the 19th November, had the misfortune to break his ankle while getting into a boat in a rough sea at Salonika. But, though in great pain, he continued to work at full pressure.

² Lord Kitchener cabled this intention to the Prime Minister on 19th November, but General Monro was told that no orders on the subject would be issued till the Government's Eastern policy had been decided.

³ General Monro was basing some of his arguments on the belief that the Turks had 200,000 to 250,000 men on the peninsula or at close call in Thrace. He gauged that they could afford to send 70,000 to 100,000 of these away to attack Egypt, and still have 135,000 to carry out an attack on the peninsula, which, with the help of German munitions, might drive the

though even he was prepared, if the navy so desired, to endeavour to hold Helles. General Davies, commanding the VIII Corps, had told Lord Kitchener that, even if Anzac and Suvla were evacuated, and even if the Turks were reinforced by German munitions, the morale of his troops had improved so much that he would now guarantee to hold the existing line at Helles throughout the winter months. This, in Kitchener's opinion, would be a satisfactory way of "saving face", and would also meet the apparent needs of the navy.¹ By the evening of the 16th, indeed, Lord Kitchener was inclining to the view that—with or without the Ayas Bay scheme—it would be advisable to evacuate Suvla and Anzac and to retain Helles, and that such a course, if the evacuation could be completed without heavy casualties, would not involve a fatal loss of British prestige. Nothing, however, could be definitely settled till a decision was reached on the subject of Salonika.

Lord Kitchener found the situation at Salonika even more menacing than he expected. There could be little doubt that if the Greeks, yielding to German pressure, should become hostile, very few of the Allied troops in the town would be able to re-embark. The one hopeful factor was that King Constantine could as little afford to ignore the wishes of the Allies as those of the Central Powers, for his seaport towns, his ships and his overseas trade were at the mercy of the Allied fleet. Britain, however, was anxious to avoid coercion, and in these circumstances Lord Kitchener was directed on the 19th November to proceed to Athens to seek an interview with the King. He was to explain to him that the Allies had no intention of putting pressure on Greece to join them against

British troops into the sea. Alternatively, to remain on the defensive on the peninsula he calculated that the Turks would only need 60,000 troops. Actually it is now known that the total number of Turks on the peninsula or at close call at this date, including those in Thrace, did not exceed 140,000 to 160,000 men, and that even the divisions which had been specially withdrawn from the line for training as storm troops could not be induced, when the critical moment arrived, to leave their trenches and attack.

¹ Lord Kitchener wrote in his memorandum of 2nd December (see also page 415): "I think the change in General Davies's views with regard to evacuation may be explained by the impression he had that the troops in the peninsula were not pulling their weight in the war. . . . These views had been widely held in France, and Monro, Davies and Byng, coming from there, naturally were impressed by them. I explained to Davies the important work the troops were doing on the peninsula, and that they were there engaged in operations which were as useful for the war as any which were being undertaken in France, and I think my observations impressed him."

Nov. Germany, but that if Allied troops were interned and disarmed it would be treated as an act of war.

This visit was successful. Though apparently determined to remain neutral, the King of Greece pledged his word that Allied troops in Serbia would not be interned on retiring into Greek territory. For the moment, therefore, the tension at Salonika was reduced, and it was at last possible to come to grips with the problem at the Dardanelles. There, owing to the increasing prevalence of high winds, the situation was causing renewed anxiety. A violent southerly gale on the 17th/18th had done so much damage to the piers at Lancashire Landing that the VIII Corps was obliged to use the French piers at V Beach for its normal daily requirements. Another gale on the 20th had done further extensive damage, and at Anzac and Helles alike the belief was gaining ground that evacuation could not be undertaken without almost prohibitive risk.¹ At this critical time the disablement on the 19th November of H.M.S. *Scourge* by boiler explosion deprived the Suvla force of one of its flanking destroyers.

Returning to Mudros on the 21st Lord Kitchener was greeted with a message from General Birdwood, who was still in nominal command of the Expeditionary Force. General Legge, the senior Australian officer in Gallipoli, had written a private letter to General Birdwood, urging that the Turkish morale was becoming lower every day, and that the evacuation of the peninsula would have a very bad effect in Australia and New Zealand: the best course to pursue would be to reinforce the Expeditionary Force, which had always been too weak for the task demanded of it. General Birdwood's message ran:

The general impression I have gathered from General Davies and senior officers at Anzac is that after experience of recent continuous periods of bad weather any withdrawal may be more costly than hanging on, about which all seem hopeful. I trust therefore that we may all hang on until there is a certainty of very strong German forces coming against us or unless we are to be transferred to some other really useful theatre of war.

Later in the day Birdwood arrived at Mudros to urge in person the case for remaining on the peninsula.

The same evening a report arrived from Imbros which offered some encouragement to the belief that unless German

¹ On the 20th November General Davies wrote to General Birdwood: "After reviewing the damage done by the recent storm, and after consultation with the naval and engineer authorities . . . I am decidedly of opinion that any attempt to carry out an evacuation [at Helles] would now lead to certain disaster"

infantry were sent to the peninsula, the Turks would not be Nov. able to capture the British positions, even with the help of plentiful ammunition. About 4 P.M. that afternoon the Turks had attempted to attack the 52nd Division in the Helles zone. In the course of a 50-minutes bombardment, they had expended "more shells than on any previous occasion for some months". But when the bombardment ceased the assaulting Turks advanced very half-heartedly and were driven back to their trenches with heavy loss before they had even crossed their own wire.

But neither this message nor General Birdwood's opinion succeeded in altering General Monro's view. At a conference with Lord Kitchener that night he again urged complete evacuation and pressed for an early decision. Except with regard to Helles, Monro's arguments were at last successful, and the following morning (22nd November) Lord Kitchener cabled home his long-expected report. He stated that, as German assistance for the Turks on the peninsula was now "practically available", and as in this case the British positions could not be maintained,¹ evacuation seemed inevitable. He recommended that the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac should be proceeded with, but that Helles should be retained, "at all events for the present". This would prevent the Turks from establishing a submarine base in the Straits, and would also facilitate the task of withdrawal from the two northern beaches. "The above", he added, "is the considered opinion of the Admiral,"² "MacMahon, Maxwell, Monro and Birdwood."

In the course of this telegram Lord Kitchener revealed that, all too late, he was now convinced that the chance of success on the peninsula had been thrown away by the policy, for which he himself was mainly responsible, of refusing Sir Ian Hamilton the reinforcements asked for in August. It is clear from his text that Lord Kitchener was deeply regretting that he and the Government had not made it possible for the offensive at Suvla

¹ It is of interest to compare this message with his telegram of the 15th; there was as yet no information of a "German force" being sent to the Dardanelles, but only a rumour of the despatch of a few heavy guns and increased ammunition.

² Admiral de Robeck, who had attended the early part of the meeting, and had apparently concurred in Lord Kitchener's recommendation, telegraphed to the First Lord next day that the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac was not favoured by the navy, but that "the generals from France seem to have the view that the war can be ended only by killing Germans, which must be carried out in France". He added, in a later telegram, "I was not present when final discussion and decision was made, but I understand evacuation was decided on after reading Monro's appreciation. Previously General Davies at Helles and General Birdwood at Anzac were in favour of holding on."

Nov. to be resumed. By renewing the attack at that point, he now vainly pointed out, it might have been possible to "turn" the Kilid Bahr position and enable the fleet to pass the "Straits". Such a success "would have entirely changed the situation in the East". But the operation had been prevented "by the mistaken policy we have followed, at the dictation of France, at Salonika", and it was now too late to attempt it.

Late on the 23rd a cable arrived from Mr. Asquith to the effect that the War Committee were in favour of total evacuation, including Helles; the matter had been referred to the Cabinet for confirmation and the final decision would be telegraphed after the Cabinet meeting next day; but the method of evacuation would be left to the commander on the spot. Thereupon Lord Kitchener confirmed General Monro in command of all the British forces in the Mediterranean outside Egypt, with General Birdwood in command at Gallipoli to carry out the evacuation.¹

The following day (24th November) Lord Kitchener sailed for England.

In point of fact, by Lord Kitchener's instructions, and in anticipation of the Government's decision, considerable progress had already been made in withdrawing surplus stores and ammunition from the peninsula. Orders were now issued by General Monro for this preliminary work to be hurried on with all possible speed. General Birdwood was further informed that orders to evacuate the whole peninsula were imminent, and that the conduct of the operation would be left entirely to him.²

¹
"Gen. Sir C. Monro,

"H.M.S. *Dar-mouth*,
"23rd November 1915.

"You will be in command of the forces in the Eastern Mediterranean outside Egypt. General Sir W. Birdwood will command at Gallipoli, where the evacuation of the peninsula will be proceeded with on the plans already arranged for in co-operation with the n.vy. . . . In order to avoid unnecessary delay General Birdwood . . . will continue to communicate with the War Office, reporting direct on important active operations and matters of extreme urgency, sending you copies of all such correspondence."
KITCHENER."

² From this date, Sir Charles Monro, in general command both in Gallipoli and at Salonika, established his General Headquarters at Mudros, with Major-General Lynden-Bell as Chief of the General Staff, Major-General Walter Campbell as A.Q.M.G., and a nucleus of staff from the old G.H.Q. at Imbros. The force on the peninsula, hitherto styled the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, was renamed the Dardanelles Army, and the old G.H.Q. at Imbros became Dardanelles Army Headquarters, with a reduced establishment. Lieut.-Colonel (acting Br.-General) C. F. Aspinall was appointed B.G.G.S., Dardanelles Army, and Br.-General G. F. MacMunn D.Q.M.G.

The outline scheme for evacuation, drawn up by the joint naval and military committee, had, by General Monro's instructions, been based on the principle that in the final stages of the operations no lives were to be sacrificed in an attempt to save guns. It had been decided by the committee that, if complete evacuation were ordered, the withdrawal from all three positions—Helles, Anzac and Suvla—should be carried out simultaneously, and that the operation should be divided into three definite stages: preliminary, intermediate and final.

The preliminary stage, already in operation, was that, in which all troops, animals and material not actually required for a defensive winter campaign could be withdrawn, without exciting comment, before the definite decision to evacuate had been received.

The intermediate stage would begin as soon as the Government had definitely decided to evacuate the peninsula, and would include all men, guns, animals and stores not required for the tactical defence of Allied positions during the final stage.

The garrison kept back for the final stage would be the minimum numbers with which it was considered possible to hold the existing positions during a spell of bad weather which might conceivably last a week. These requirements had been tentatively placed by the committee at 26,000 men and 40 guns both at Anzac and at Suvla, and 18,500 men and 60 guns at Helles. The committee further recommended that, to obviate difficulties of divided command, the whole French force at Helles, less a proportion of guns, should be withdrawn during the intermediate stage and their trenches taken over by British troops. In point of fact, in deciding upon the strength of the garrison to be left for the final stage, two factors had to be considered, each antagonistic to the other. Not only was it essential that the garrisons should be strong enough to hold out against Turkish attacks during a week of bad weather. It was also essential that, once begun, the final stage should be completed very quickly. General Monro had stated as a guide that it should be completed in two nights. On going into details, however, the committee found that a garrison capable of holding out for a week could not be embarked in the available boats in less than three nights. If all three beaches were to be evacuated at once, it was either a question of reducing their garrisons below safe limits or extending the final stage to three nights. The latter alternative was recommended as the less dangerous, and was approved by the Commander-in-Chief. Subsequently,

Nov. however, owing to all three evacuations not taking place simultaneously, two nights proved sufficient for the final stage at Suvla and Anzac and one for the final stage at Helles.

In order to deal with the large numbers of wounded which might have to be evacuated in the course of the operation, General Monro had asked for 56 hospital ships, including the three mammoth liners *Mauretania*, *Aquitania* and *Britannic*. These three ships were to carry wounded direct from Mudros to the United Kingdom, while of the remaining 53, 26 would be utilized for the ferry from the peninsula to Egypt or Malta, and 27 between Malta or Egypt and England. He had also urged that at least 12,000 hospital beds should be held in readiness at Egypt or Malta.

It was decided that, on withdrawal from the peninsula, part of the Dardanelles Army should be assembled at Imbros, part at Mudros, and part at Mitylene. At Mudros, however, there was only water for 45,000 men,¹ and orders were now issued for the camps at that port to be cleared by sending away to Egypt all the troops of the 2nd Mounted Division who were resting there at the time, and all the drafts which had recently arrived from England. It was further decided to deflect to Egypt all vessels on the way from England with reinforcing units.

The first essential for a successful evacuation was secrecy. Furthermore, though the preliminary stage was now beginning, it was highly important from the point of view of morale that, till the Cabinet's decision was received, the army as a whole should not guess that the abandonment of the expedition was even contemplated. For this reason, various expedients—not, however, universally successful—had already been adopted by G.H.Q. to provide a reasonable excuse for the gradual thinning of the garrison. Instructions had been issued on the 23rd November, for instance, that, owing to the sinking of a large number of storeships in the Ægean, large quantities of ammunition and supplies must at once be sent from Gallipoli to Salonika. The Gallipoli garrison was further told that the Commander-in-Chief had decided that far more troops than hitherto were to be sent away for rest. The 54th Division was to be withdrawn at once to Mudros, and two companies R.E. from Suvla and two from Anzac were also to proceed to the islands.²

But all these steps were premature. News was soon to arrive that, despite the unanimous recommendation of the War

¹ At Imbros there was water for only 20,000 men.

² Actually these companies were required to make large camps.

Committee, the British Cabinet could not make up their mind, Nov. and that the whole policy for the Eastern theatre was once again in the melting pot.

On the peninsula, during the first three weeks of November, the health of the troops had improved with the cool weather and the disappearance of flies, and the latest units to arrive were growing accustomed to the normal routine of a not very active type of trench warfare. In the Helles zone the VIII Corps continued the bombing and mining operations begun in October. In the right sector these operations culminated on the 15th November in a successful little attack carried out by the 156th Brigade of the 52nd Division. The objective was a small salient near the Vineyard. At 3 P.M. three mines were exploded under the Turkish trenches, and the assaulting parties at once dashed forward and occupied their allotted posts. The Turks were taken by surprise, and the Scottish troops had no great difficulty in pushing up the various communication trenches which led from the captured position. Their total losses were under fifty, while the Turkish losses were more than treble that number.

This attack was effectively supported by French and British artillery, and by the covering ships of the navy, which shelled the enemy's communications and battery positions till the line had been consolidated. The naval support was particularly well arranged. "All who saw it," wrote the corps commander to the senior naval officer of the 1st Squadron, "agree as to the accuracy and value of the monitors' fire, but the chief point is that it has been established that naval co-operation in an attack has now become a practical reality, and that a system has been devised which, with further development, will prove a powerful factor both in attack and defence."

On the evening of the 16th the Turks counter-attacked the captured position four times without success, and an attack which they planned for the 21st November was also easily repulsed.

In the Anzac area mining operations were continued at Lone Pine, Russell's Top and Hill 60. At Lone Pine the enemy's tunnels were broken into, and there was some grim but successful fighting underground. On the 16th November a mine was exploded on Hill 60, which obliterated the Turkish front-line trench. On the 28th and 29th November the Lone Pine position was shelled by the enemy with heavy ammunition, causing much damage to the Australian trenches and rather heavy casualties.

Nov. At Suvla during the month there was very little infantry activity on either side. On the 17th, after a long and careful preparation, small parties of the 11th Division occupied two advanced posts on the Kiretch Tepe ridge. But they were driven out next day, and a second attempt to take these positions was unsuccessful.